FILE NO. 113.

ONE OF THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS, AND HOW IT WAS SOLVED.

(By EMILE GABORIAU.)

CHAPTER V.

While his whole past was the object of the most minute investigations, Prosper was in prison, in a secret cell.

The two first days had not appeared very long.

He had requested and been granted, some sheets of paper, numbered, which he was obliged to account for; and he wrote, with a sort of rage, plans of defense and a narrative of justification.

The third day he began to be uneasy at not seeing anyone except the condemned prisoners who were employed to serve those confined in secret cells, and the jailer who brought his food.

"Am I not to be examined again?" he would ask.

"Your turn is coming," the jailer invariably answered.

Time passed; and the wretched man, tortured by the sufferings of solitary confinement, which quickly breaks the spirit, sunk into the depths of despair.

"Am I to stay here forever?" he moaned.

No, he was not forgotten; for on Monday morning, at one o'clock, an hour when the jailer never came, he heard the heavy bolt of his cell pushed back.

He ran toward the door.

But the sight of a gray-headed man standing on the sill rooted him to the spot.

"Father," he gasped, "father!"

"Your father, yes!".

Prosper's astonishment at seeing his father was instantly succeeded by a feeling of great joy.

A father is the one friend upon whom we can always rely. In the hour of need, when all else fails, we remember this man upon whose knees we sat when children, and who soothed our sorrows; and although he can in no way assist us, his presence alone comforts and strengthens.

Without reflecting, Prosper, impelled by tender feeling, was about to throw himself on his father's bosom. M. Bertomy harshly repulsed him.

"Do not approach me!" he exclaimed.

He then advanced into the cell, and closed the door. The father and son were alone together—Prosper, heartbroken, crushed; M. Bertomy, angry, almost threatening.

Cast off by this last friend, by his father, the miserable young man seemed to be stupefied with pain and disappointment.

"You, too!" he bitterly cried. "You—you believe me guilty? Oh, father!"

"Spare yourself this shameful comedy," interrupted M. Bertomy. "I know all."

"But I am innocent, father; I swear it by the sacred memory of my mother."

"Unhappy wretch," cried M. Bertomy, "do not blaspheme!"

He seemed overcome by tender thoughts of the past, and in a weak, broken voice, he added:

"Your mother is dead, Prosper, and little did I think that the day would come when I could thank God for having taken her from me. Your crime would have killed her, would have broken her heart!"

After a painful silence, Prosper said:

"You overwhelm me, father, and at the moment when I need all my courage; when I am the victim of an odious plot."

"Victim!" cried M. Bertomy, "victim! Dare you utter your insinuations against the honorable man who has taken care of you, loaded you with benefits, and had insured you a brilliant future? It is enought for you to have robbed him; do not calumniate him."

"For pity's sake, father, let me speak!"

"I suppose you would deny your benefactor's kindness. Yet you were at one time so sure of his affection, that you wrote me to hold myself in readiness to come to Paris and ask Monsieur Fauvel for the hand of his niece. Was that a lie, too?"

"No," said Prosper, in a choked voice, "no."

"That was a year ago; you then loved Mademoiselle Madeleine; at least you wrote me that you—"

"Father, I love her now, more than ever; I have never ceased to love her."

M. Bertomy made a gesture of contemptuous pity.

"Indeed!" he cried, "and the thought of the pure, innocent girl whom you loved did not prevent your entering upon a path of sin. You loved her; how dared you then, without blushing, approach her presence after associating with the shameless creatures with whom you were so intimtae?"

"For Heaven's sake let me explain by what fatality Madeleine—"

"Enough, monsieur, enough. I told you that I know everything. I saw Monsieur Fauvel yesterday; this morning I saw the judge, and 'tis to his kindness that I am indebted for this interview. Do you know what mortification I suffered before being allowed to see you? I was searched and made to empty all of my pockets, on suspicion of bringing you arms!"

Prosper ceased to justify himself, but in a helpless, hopeless way, dropped down upon a seat.

"I have seen your apartments, and at once recognized the proofs of your crime. I saw silk curtains hanging before every window and door, and the walls covered with pictures. In my father's house the walls were whitewashed; and there was but one arm-chair in the whole house, and that was my mother's. Our luxury was our honesty. You are the first member of our family who has possessed Aubusson carpets; though, to be sure, you are the first thief of our blood."

At this last insult Prosper's face flushed crimson, but he remained silent and immovable.

"But luxury is necessary now," continued M. Bertomy, becoming more excited and angry as he went on, "luxury must be had at any price. You must have the insolent opulence and display of an upstart, without being an upstart. You must support worthless women who wear satin slippers lined with swan's-down, like those I saw in your rooms, and keep servants in livery—and you steal! And bankers no longer trust their safe keys with anybody; and every day honest families are disgraced by the discovery of some new piece of villainy."

M. Bertomy suddenly stopped. He saw that his son was not in a condition to hear any more reproaches.

"But I will say no more," he said. "I came here not to reproach, but, if possible, to save the honor of our name, to prevent it from being published in the papers among the names of thieves and murderers. Stand up and listen to me!"

At the imperious tone of his father, Prosper arose. So many successive blows had reduced him to a state of torpor.

"First of all," began M. Bertomy, "how much have you remaining of the stolen three hundred and fifty thousand francs?"

"Once more, father," replied the unfortunate man, in tone of helpless resignation, "once more I swear I am innocent."

"So I supposed you would say. Then our family will have to repair the injury you have done Monsieur Fauvel."

"What do you mean?"

"The day he heard of your crime, your brother-in-law brought me your sister's dowry—70,000 francs. I succeeded in collecting 140,000 francs more. This makes 210,000 francs, which I have brought with me to give to Monsieur Fauvel."

"You not dare disgrace me thus!" his torpor.

"You shall do nothing of the kind!" he cried, with unrestrained indignation.

"I will do so before the sun goes down this day. Monsieur Fauvel will grant me time to pay the rest. My pension is 1,500 francs. I can live upon 500, and am strong enough to go to work again; and your brother-in-law—"

M. Bertomy stopped short, frightened at the expression on his son's face. His features were contracted with such furious rage that he was scarcely recognizable, and his eyes glared like a maniac's.

"You dare not disgrace me thus!" he cried: "you have no right to do it. You are free to disbelieve me yourself, but you have no right for taking a step that would be a confession of guilt and ruin me forever. Who and what convinces you of my guilt? When cold justice hesitates, you, my father, hesitate not; but, more pitiless than the law, condemn me unheard!"

"I only do my duty."

"Which means that I stand on the edge of a precipice, and you push me over. Do you call that your duty? What! between strangers who accuse me, and myself who swear that I am innocent, do you not hesitate? Why? Is it because I am your son? Our honor is at stake, it is true; but that is only the more reason why you should sustain me, and assist me to defend myself."

Prosper's earnest, truthful manner was enough to unsettle the firmest convictions and make doubt penetrate the most stubborn mind.

"Yes," said M. Bertomy, in a hesitating tone, "everything seems to accuse you."

"Ah, father, do you not know that I was suddenly banished from Madeleine's presence; that I was compelled to avoid her. I became desperate, and tried to forget my sorrow in dissipation. I sought oblivion, and found shame and disgust. Oh, Madeleine, Madeleine!"

He was overcome with emotion; but in a few minutes he started up with renewed violence in his voice and manner.

"Everything is against me!" he exclaimed, "but no matter. I will justify myself or perish in the attempt. Human justice is liable to err; although innocent, I may be convicted; so be it. I will undergo my penalty; but people are not kept galley-slaves forever."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, father, that I am now another man. My life, henceforth, has an object—vengeance! I am the victim of a vile plot. As long as I have a drop of blood in my veins, I will seek its author. And I will certainly find him; and then bitterly shall he expiate all of my cruel suffering. The blow came from the house of Fauvel, and I will live to prove it."

"Take care: your anger makes you say things that you will repent hereafter."

"Yes, I see, you are going to descant upon the probity of Monsieur Andre Fauvel. You will tell me that all the virtues have taken refuge in the bosom of his patriarchal family. What do you know about it? Would this be the first instance in which the most shameful secrets are concealed beneath the fairest appearances? Why did Madeleine suddenly forbid me to think of her? Why has she exiled me, when she suffers as much from our separation as I myself, when she still loves me? For she does love me, I am sure of it. I have proofs of it."

The jailer came to say that the time allotted to M. Bertomy had expired, and that he must leave the cell.

A thousand conflicting emotions seemed to rend the old man's heart.

Suppose Prosper were telling the truth: how great would be his remorse, if he had added to his already great weight of sorrow and trouble! And who could prove that he was not sincere?

The voice of this son, of whom he had always been so proud, had aroused all his paternal affection, so violently repressed. Ah, were he guilty, and guilty of a worse crime, still he was his son, his only son!

His countenance lost its severity, and his eyes filled with tears.

He had resolved to leave, as he had entered, stern and angry: he had not the cruel courage. His heart was breaking. He opened his arms, and pressed Prosper to his heart.

"Oh, my son!" he murmured, "God grant you have spoken the truth!"

Prosper was triumphant: he had almost convinced his father of his innocence. But he had not time to rejoice over this victory.

The cell door again opened, and the jailer's gruff voice once more called out:

"It is time for you to appear before the court."

He instantly obeyed the order.

But his step was no longer unsteady, as a few days previous; a complete change had taken place within him. He walked with a firm step, head erect, and the fire of resolution in his eye.

He knew the way now, and he walked a little ahead of the constable who escorted him.

As he was passing through the room full of policemen, he met the man with the gold spectacles, who had watched him so intently the day he was searched.

"Courage, Monsieur Prosper Bertomy," he said: "if you are innocent, there are those who will help you."

Prosper started with surprise, and was about to reply, when the man disappeared.

"Who is that gentleman?" he asked the policeman.

"Is it possible that you don't know him?" replied the policeman, with surprise. "Why it is Monsieur Lecoq, of the police service."

"You say his name is Lecoq?"

"You might as well say 'monsieur,'" said the offended policeman; "it would not burn your mouth. Monsieur Lecoq is a man who knows everything he wants to know, without its ever being told to him. If you had him instead of that smooth-tongued, imbecile Fanferlot, your case would have been settled long ago. Nobody is allowed to waste time when he has command. But he seems to be a friend of yours."

"I never saw him until the first day I came here."

"You can't swear to that, because no one can boast of knowing the real face of Monsieur Lecoq. It is one thing to-day, and another to-morrow; sometimes he is a dark man, sometimes a fair one, sometimes quite young, and then an octogenarian: why, not seldom he even deceives me. I begin to talk to a stranger—paf! the first thing I know it is Monsieur Lecoq! Anybody on the face of the earth might be he. If I were told that you were he, I should say, 'It is very likely.' Ah! he can convert himself into any shape and form he chooses. He is a wonderful man!"

The constable would have continued forever his praises of M. Lecoq had not the sight of the judge's door put an end to them.

This time, Prosper was not kept waiting on the wooden bench; the judge, on the contrary, was waiting for him.

M. Patrigent, who was a profound observer of human nature, had contrived the interview between M. Bertomy and his son.

He was sure that between the father, a man of suchstubbornhonor, and the son, accused of theft, an affecting scene would take place, and this scene would completely unman Prosper, and make him confess.

He determined to send for him as soon as the interview was over, while all his nerves were vibrating with terrible emotions; he would tell the truth, to relieve his troubled, despairing mind.

His surprise was great to see the cashier's bearing; resolute without obstinacy, firm and assured without defiance.

"Well," he said, "have you reflected?"

"Not being guilty, monsieur, I have nothing to reflect upon."

"Ah, I see the prison has not been a good counselor: you forget that sincerity and repentance are the first things necessary to obtain the indulgence of the law."

"I crave no indulgence, monsieur."

M. Patrigent looked vexed, and said:

"What would you say if I told you what had become of the 350,000 francs?"

"If it were known, monsieur, I would not be here, but at liberty."

This device had often been used by the judge, and generally succeeded; but with a man so thoroughly master of himself, there was small chance of success. It had been used at a venture, and failed.

"Then you persist in accusing Monsieur Fauvel?"

"Him, or someone else."

"Excuse me; no one else, since he alone knew the word. Had he any interest in robbing himself?"

"I can think of none."

"Well, now I will tell you what interest you had in robbing him."

M. Patrigent spoke as a man who was convinced of the facts he was about to state; but his assurance was all assumed.

He had relied upon crushing, at a blow, a despairing, wretched man, and was nonplussed by seeing him appear so determined upon resistance.

"Will you be good enough to tell me," he said, in a vexed tone, "how much you have spent during the last year?"

Prosper did not find it necessary to stop to reflect and calculate.

"Yes, monsieur," he answered, unhesitatingly. "Circumstances made it necessary for me to preserve the greatest order in my wild career; I spent about fifty thousand francs."

"Where did you obtain them?"

"In the first place, 12,000 francs were left to me by my mother. I received from Monsieur Fauvel 14,000 francs, as my salary and share of the profits. By speculating in stocks I gained 8,000 francs. The rest I borrowed, and intend paying out of the 15,000 francs which I have deposited in Monsieur Fauvel's bank."

The account was clear, exact, and could be easily proved; it must be a true one.

"Who lent you the money?"

"Monsieur Raoul de Lagors."

This witness had left Paris the day of the robbery, and could not be found; so for the time being M. Patrigent was compelled to rely upon Prosper's word.

"Well," he said, "I will not press this point; but tell me why, in spite of the formal order of Monsieur Fauvel, you drew the money from the Bank of France the night before, instead of waiting till the morning of the payment?"

"Because Monsieur de Clameran had informed me that it would be agreeable, necessary even, for him to have his money early in the morning. He will testify to that fact, if you summon him; and I knew that I should reach my office late."

"Then Monsieur de Clameran is a friend of yours?"

"By no means. I have always felt repelled by him; but he is the intimate friend of Monsieur Lagors."

While Sigault was writing down these answers, M. Patrigent was racking his brain to imagine what could have occurred between M. Bertomy and his son, to cause this transformation in Prosper.

"One more thing," said the judge: "how did you spend the evening, the night before the crime?"

"When I left my office, at five o'clock I took the St. Germain train, and went to Vesinet—Monsieur de Lagor's country seat—to carry him fifteen hundred francs which he had asked for; and, not finding him at home, I left it with his servant."

"Did he tell you that Monsieur de Lagors was going away?"

"No, monsieur. I did not know that he had left Paris."

"Where did you go when you left Vesinet?"

"I returned to Paris, and dined at a restaurant with a friend."

"And then?"

Prosper hesitated.

"You are silent," said M. Patrigent, "then I will tell you how you employed your time. You returned to your rooms in the Rue Chaptal, dressed yourself, and attended a soiree given by one of those women who style themselves dramatic artistes, and who are a disgrace to the stage, who receive a hundred crowns a year, and yet keep their carriages—at Mademoiselle Wilson's."

"You are right, monsieur."

"There is heavy playing at Wilson's?"

"Sometimes."

"You are in the habit of visiting places of this sort. Were you not connected in some way with a scandalous adventure which took place at the house of a woman named Crescenzi?"

"I was summoned to testify, having witnessed a theft."

"Gambling generally leads to stealing. And did you not play at baccarat at Wilson's and lose eighteen hundred francs?"

"Excuse me, monsieur, only eleven hundred."

"Very well. In the morning you paid a note of a thousand francs."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Moreover, there remained in your desk five hundred francs, and you had four hundred in your purse when you were arrested. So that altogether, in twenty-four hours, four thousand five hundred francs—"

Prosper was not discountenanced, but stupefied.

Not being aware of the powerful means of investigation possessed by the law, he wondered how, in so short a time, the judge could have obtained such accurate information.

"Your statement is correct, monsieur," he said, finally.

"Where did all this money come from? The evening before you had so little that you were obliged to defer the payment of a small bill."

"The day to which you allude, I sold, through an agent, some bonds I had, about three thousand francs; besides, I took from the safe two thousand francs in advance on my salary."

The prisoner had given clear answers to all the questions put to him, and M. Patrigent thought he would attack him from a new point.

"You say you have no wish to conceal any of your actions; then why did you write this note to one of your companions?" Here he held up the mysterious note.

This time the blow struck. Prosper's eyes dropped before the inquiring look of the judge.

"I thought," he stammered. "I wished—"

"You wished to screen this woman!"

"Yes, monsieur; I did. I knew that a man in my condition, accused of a robbery, has every fault, every weakness he has ever indulged in, charged against him as a great crime."

"Which means that you knew that the presence of a woman at your house would tell very much against you, and that justice would not excuse this scandalous defiance of public morality. A man who respects himself so little as to associate with a worthless woman does not elevate her to his standard, but he descends to her base level."

"Monsieur!"

"I suppose you know who the woman is whom you permit to bear the honest name borne by your mother?"

"Madame Gipsy was a governess when I first knew her. She was born at Oporto, and came to France with a Portuguese family."

"Her name is not Gipsy; she has never been a governess, and she is not a Portuguese."

Prosper began to protest against this statement; but M. Patrigent shrugged his shoulders, and began looking over a large file of papers on his desk.

"Ah, here it is," he said, "listen: Palmyre Chorareille, born at Paris in 1840, daughter of James Chocareille, undertaker's assistant, and of Caroline Piedlent, his wife."

Prosper looked vexed and impatient; he did not know that the judge was reading him this report to convince him that nothing can escape the police.

"Palmyre Chocareille," he continued, "at 12 years of age was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and remained with him until she was 16. Traces of her for one year are lost. At the age of 17 she is hired as a servant by a grocer on the Rue St. Denis, named Dombas, and remains there three months. She lives out during this same year, 1857, at eight different places. In 1858 she entered the store of a fan-merchant in Choisent alley."

As he read, the judge watched Prosper's face to observe the effect of these revelations.

"Toward the close of 1858 she was employed as a servant by Madame Munes, and accompanied her to Lisbon. How long she remained in Lisbon, and what she did while she remained there is not reported. But in 1861 she returned to Paris, and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for assault and battery. Ah, she returned from Portugal with the name of Nina Gipsy."

"But I assure you, monsieur—" Prosper began.

"Yes, I understand; this history is less romantic, doubtless, than the one related to you; but then it has the merit of being true. We lose sight of Palmyre Chocareille, called Gipsy, upon her release from prison; but we meet her again six months later, having made the acquaintance of a traveling agent named Caldas, who became infatuated with her beauty, and furnished her a house near the Bastile. She assumed his name for some time, then she deserted him to devote herself to you. Did you ever hear of this Caldas?"

"Never, monsieur."

"This foolish man so deeply loved this creature that her desertion drove him almost insane from grief. He was a very resolute man, and publicly swore that he would kill his rival if he ever found him. The current report afterward was, that he committed suicide. He certainly sold the furniture of the house occupied by Chocareille, and suddenly disappeared. All the efforts made to discover him proved fruitless."

The judge stopped a moment, as if to give Prosper time for reflection, and then slowly said:

"And this is the woman whom you made your companion, the woman for whom you robbed the bank?"

Once more M. Patrigent was on the wrong track, owing to Fanferlot's incomplete information.

He had hoped that Prosper would betray himself by uttering some passionate retort when thus wounded to the quick; but he remained impassible. Of all the judge said to him his mind dwelt upon only one word—Caldas, the name of the poor traveling agent who had killed himself.

"At any rate," insisted M. Patrigent, "you will confess that this girl has caused your ruin."

"I can not confess that, monsieur, for it is not true."

"Yet she is the occasion of your extravagance. Listen." The judge here drew a bill from the file of papers. "During December you paid her dressmaker, Van Klopen, for two walking dresses, 900 francs; one evening dress, 700 francs; one domino, trimmed with lace, 700 francs."

"I spent this money cheerfully, but nevertheless I was not especially attached to her."

M. Patrigent shrugged his shoulders..

"You can not deny the evidence," said he. "I suppose you will also say that it was not for the girl's sake you ceased spending your evenings at Monsieur Fauvel's."

"I swear she was not the cause of my ceasing to visit Monsieur Fauvel's family."

"Then why did you cease suddenly your attentions to a young lady, who you confidently expected to marry, and whose hand you had written to your father to demand for you?"

"I had reasons which I can not reveal," answered Prosper, with emotion.

The judge breathed freely; at last he had discovered a vulnerable point in the prisoner's armor.

"Did Mademoiselle Madeleine banish you?"

Prosper was silent, and seemed agitated.

"Speak," said M. Patrigent; "I must tell you that this circumstance is one of the most important in your case."

"Whatever the cost may be, on this subject I am compelled to keep silence."

"Beware of what you do; justice will not be satisfied with scruples of conscience."

M. Patrigent waited for an answer. None came.

"You persist in your obstinacy, do you? Well, we will go on to the next question. You have, during the last year, spent 50,000 francs. Your resources are at an end, and your credit is exhausted; to continue your mode of life was impossible. What did you intend to do?"

"I had no settled plan. I thought it might last as long as it would, and then I—"

"And then you would draw from the safe?"

"Ah monsieur, if I were guilty, I should not be here! I should never have been such a fool as to return to the bank; I should have fled."

M. Patrigent could not restrain a smile of satisfaction, and exclaimed:

"Exactly the argument I expected you to use. You showed your shrewdness precisely by staying to face the storm, instead of flying the country. Several recent suits have taught dishonest cashiers that flight abroad is dangerous. Railways travel fast, but telegrams travel faster. A French thief can be arrested in London within forty-eight hours after his description has been telegraphed. Even America is no longer a refuge. You remained prudently and wisely, saying to yourself, 'I will manage to avoid suspicion; and, even if I am found out, I shall be free again after three or five years' seclusion, with a large fortune to enjoy.' Many people would sacrifice five years of their lives for 350,000 francs."

"But, monsieur, had I calculated in the manner you describe, I should not have been content with 350,000 francs; I should have waited for an opportunity to steal half a million. I often have that sum in charge."

"Oh! it is not always convenient to wait."

Prosper was buried in deep thought for some minutes.

"Monsieur," he finally said, "there is one detail I forgot to mention before, it may be of importance."

"Explain, if you please."

"The office messenger whom I sent to the Bank of France for the money must have seen me tie up the bundle, and put it away in the safe. At any rate, he knows that I left the bank before he did."

"Very well; the man shall be examined. Now you can return to your cell; and once more I advise you to consider the consequences of your persistent denial."

M. Patrigent thus abruptly dismissed Prosper because he wished to immediately act upon this last piece of information.

"Sigault," said he, as soon as Prosper had left the room, "is not this Antonin the man who was excused from testifying because he sent a doctor's certificate declaring him too ill to appear?"

"It is, monsieur."

"Where does he live?"

"Fanferlot says he was so ill that he was taken to the hospital—the Dubois hospital."

"Very well. I am going to examine him to-day, this very hour. Take you pen and paper, and send for a carriage."

It was some distance from the Palais de Justice to the Dubois hospital; but the cabman, urged by the promise of a large fee, made his sorry jades fly as if they were blooded horses.

Would Antonin be able to answer any questions?

The physician in charge of the hospital said, that, although the man suffered horribly from a broken knee, his mind was perfectly clear.

"That being the case, monsieur," said the judge, "I wish to examine him, and desire that no one be admitted while he makes his deposition."

"Oh! you will not be intruded upon, monsieur; his room contains four beds, but they are just now unoccupied."

When Antonin saw the judge enter, followed by a little weazen man in black, with a portfolio under his arm, he at once knew what he had come for.

"Ah," he said, "monsieur comes to see me about Monsieur Bertomy's case?"

"Precisely."

M. Patrigent remained standing by the sick-bed, while Sigault arranged his papers on a little table.

In answer to the usual questions the messenger swore that he was named Antonin Poche, was 40 years old, born at Cadaujac (Gironde), and was unmarried.

"Now," said the judge, "are you well enough to clearly answer any questions I may put?"

"Certainly, monsieur."

"Did you, on the 27th of February, go to the Bank of France for the 350,000 francs that were stolen?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"At what hour did you return with the money?"

"It must have been five o'clock when I got back."

"Do you remember what Monsieur Bertomy did when you handed him the notes? Now, do not be in a hurry; think before you answer."

"Let me see; first he counted the notes, and made them into four packages; then he put them in the safe, and then—it seems to me—and then he locked the safe; and, yet, I am not mistaken, he went out!"

He uttered these last words so quickly, that, forgetting his knee, he half started up; but, with a cry of pain, sunk back in bed.

"Are you sure of what you say?" asked the judge.

M. Patrigent's solemn tone seemed to frighten Antonin.

"Sure?" he replied, with marked hesitation, "I would bet my head on it, yet I am not sure!"

It was impossible for him to be more decided in his answers. He had been frightened. He already imagined himself in difficulty, and for a trifle he would have detracted everything.

But the effect was already produced; and when they retired M. Patrigent said to Sigault:

"This is a very important piece of evidence."

TO BE CONTINUED.

Not Doing It Justice.

Jack—Oh, mother, I do love cake! It's awful nice.

Mother (reprovingly)—You should not say you "love" cake—say "like." Do not say "awful"—say "very." Do not say "nice"—say "good." And, by the way, the word "oh" should be omitted. Now, my dear, repeat the sentence correctly.

Jack—I like cake, it's very good.

Mother—That's better.

Jack (with an air of disgust)—It sounds as if I was only talking 'bout bread.—Royal.

Impossible.

Miss Elder—Well, I maintain that women can do anything that men can.

Mr. Gazzam—Oh, no. The auctioneer's business is one a woman cannot go into.

Miss Elder—Nonsense. She'd make every bit as good an auctioneer as a man.

Mr. Gazzam—Just imagine an unmarried woman getting up before a crowd and exclaiming: "Now, gentlemen, all I want is an offer!"—Tit-Bits.

PRETTY GIRL BEATS WAY ON A FREIGHT

YOUNG MEMBER OF GENTLER SEX TURNS HOBO.

CRAWLS INTO A BOX CAR.

Rides on Bed of Tiles from St. Louis to Joliet, Ill., Where She Is Discovered by a Kind Brakeman Who Helps Her.

Chicago.—An 18-year-old Chicago girl enjoys the distinction of being the first of her sex to make a long journey by stealing a ride on a freight train. It is not strictly true to say that she enjoys this distinction. When her experience was over she declared emphatically that a life on the rolling freight did not appeal to her.

"No more hobo life for me!" exclaimed Miss Helen Hansen, as she crawled out of a box car.

Miss Hansen is a stenographer. Her parents life in Chicago, but she had a job in St. Louis. Thrown out of this by the firm's failure, she tried in vain to find another job.

First her slender savings melted away. Then she pawned her clothing, piece by piece, till she had only one suit left. Her parents were poor so that she could not appeal to them for help.

She did appeal to one of the firm for whom she had worked, asking him to lend her enough money for a ticket back to Chicago. The reply she received made her decide that anything would be better than to trust to appeals for help.

She was at the end of her resources when it suddenly occurred to her that she had heard of people traveling without railway tickets and that what other folks had done Sarah Hansen could do, too.

On the spur of that inspiration she made for the freight yards of the Chicago & Alton railroad. There she found an embarrassment of riches in the line of freight trains.

They were scooting up and down and switching back and forth in the most disconcerting manner, for it was impossible to this new recruit to the hobo profession to decide in which direction any one train would ultimately decide to depart. An angel in the very unusual disguise of a small boy appeared and told her that No. 6, on

SHE CLIMBED INTO A BOX CAR.

the third track was the Chicago freight. That was welcome information.

Slipping away from the small boy angel, Miss Hansen stole along in the shadow of No. 6 until she came to the open door of a box car half full of tiles. She climbed in and crawled into the corner to await developments.

These promised to take the unwelcome shape of two other hoboes, who were not pretty girls, or even girls at all. One of them had actually climbed into the car and had turned to assist his brother knight of the road, when an approaching brakeman caused them both to take a hurried departure.

Miss Hansen rode all night on her none too soft bed of tiles. Morning came and hour after hour went by without her being molested. At Joliet she crawled to the door for the purpose of spying out the land and discovering her whereabouts.

Instead of discovering, however, she was herself discovered, for at the door she came face to face with the brakeman. It was a tossup which of them was the more disturbed by the encounter.

When the amazed brakeman managed to demand the why and wherefore of her presence in his car Miss Hansen burst into tears and told him all about it.

"Well!" said the brakeman; "I thought I'd seen every kind o' hobo that ever beat a freight train, but you're the first lady hobo that ever come my way!"

Whereupon, like a gentleman and a philanthropist, he emptied his pockets of their contents, which were 60 cents, and handed the amount to Miss Hansen with the advice to complete her journey via the trolley line. The girl took both the money and the advice, got herself the first food she had tasted in 24 hours and departed forever, so she vowed, from the ranks of the hoboes.

Cold Deal.

"There was a time, ma'am," said the beggar, "when I had money to burn."

"And you burned it, I suppose?"

"No, ma'am; I lorst it fightin' th' ict trust."——Chicago Daily News.

A Boon.

Mrs. Henpek—You may talk as much as you please—

Henpek—Thank heaven!—N. Y. Sun.